

Submitted by
Sonja Johnson

News from the Export-Import Bank of the United States

October 20, 2005

Contact: Phil Cogan (202) 565-3200

MICHIGAN BUSINESSES GAIN EXPORT ASSISTANCE AS VAN ANDEL GLOBAL TRADE CENTER BECOMES EX-IM BANK CITY-STATE PARTNER

Enhanced Financing Support For Companies

WASHINGTON, DC — Michigan companies seeking to begin or increase exports to world markets have gained a powerful new ally right in their own backyard now that the Van Andel Global Trade Center in Grand Rapids and the Export-Import Bank of the United States (Ex-Im Bank) have signed a partnership agreement.



The Van Andel Global Trade Center (VAGTC) has joined Ex-Im Bank's City-State Partners Program, a national marketing initiative that brings export financing services to small- and medium-sized U.S. companies through cooperation with state and local government offices and private sector organizations. With the addition of the VAGTC, Ex-Im Bank now has 44 city-state partners in 35 states, plus the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

The Van Andel Global Trade Center of Grand Valley State University is co-located on the downtown Grand Rapids campus with both the U.S. Export Assistance Center, as well as the State of Michigan headquarters of the Small Business Technology Development Centers. In addition, the VAGTC serves as the administrator of the KOM Foreign Trade Zone #189.

The region is home to several industry clusters including automotive supply, office furniture, food service, life science technology, and plastics.

The mission of the VAGTC is to increase the ability of Michigan businesses to compete globally. As an Ex-Im Bank City-State partner, VAGTC can now provide strengthened support for Michigan businesses seeking to sell their products or services in international markets through its new partnership with the Ex-Im Bank.

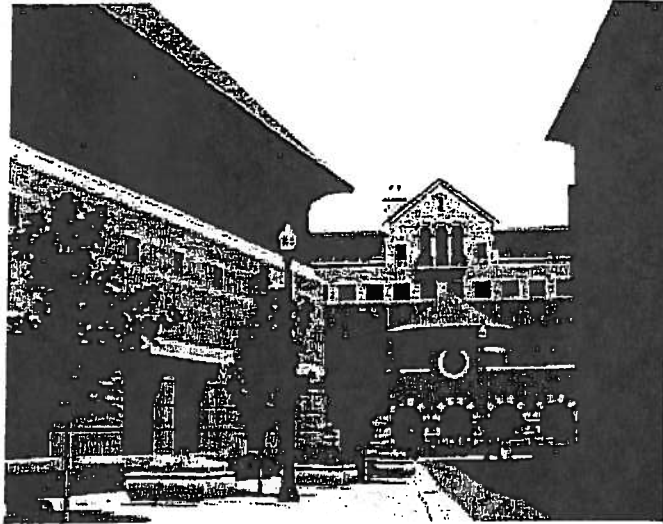
"Small business is a powerful engine of American job and export growth," said James H. Lambright, president and chairman (acting) of Ex-Im Bank. "Our partners ensure these small businesses have the same expertise and export opportunities as large companies and foreign competitors."

A total of 12,127 companies exported goods from Michigan locations in 2002. Of those, 10,573 (87 percent) were small and medium-sized enterprises, with fewer than 500 employees.

"A major key to success in the global marketplace is being able to offer competitive financing options to foreign buyers, and having available working capital to produce the goods for export," said Jeffrey Meyer, executive director of the VAGTC. "This new relationship with Ex-Im Bank opens the door for Michigan businesses to take full advantage of the valuable plans and programs that will allow them to be more competitive in export markets."

As a City-State Partner, the Center can walk local businesses through the process of applying for a wide range of Ex-Im Bank financing tools including working capital support and export credit insurance and guarantees that will enable them to better compete in growth markets abroad.

The Center offers a range of services to Michigan businesses, including training, consulting and pro bono counseling. Since 1999, the VAGTC has trained over 6,000 individuals and consulted over 600 companies in the Michigan area on international business topics. It has provided over 1,000 hours of pro bono counseling hours to area businesses.



Ex-Im Bank trains its partners to market Ex-Im Bank's products to local businesses and lenders, teach seminars, advise exporters and lenders, and package loan transactions for lender approval. Companies needing financing assistance should contact Jeffrey Meyer at the Center at (616) 331-6811.

EX-IM BANK CITY-STATE PARTNER - The Van Andel Global Trade Center (VAGTC) is Ex-Im Bank's newest partner in a national marketing initiative that brings export financing services to small- and medium-sized U.S. companies. The VAGTC of Grand Valley State University is co-located on the downtown Grand Rapids, Mich. campus, pictured above.

Michigan's export shipments of merchandise in 2004 totaled \$35.6 billion, placing Michigan fourth among the states in this category. Jobs generated by exports of services and jobs sustained by direct exports of products from other non-manufacturing sectors (e.g., mining and agriculture) are excluded.

Consequently, the numbers understate the total employment impact of exports on the U.S. economy.

In the past five years Ex-Im Bank has supported over \$592 million of exports from 124 Michigan companies in 72 communities.

Ex-Im Bank, now in its 71st year of operation, is an independent U.S. government agency that helps finance the sale of U.S. exports primarily to emerging markets throughout the world by providing loans, guarantees and insurance. In fiscal year 2004, Ex-Im Bank authorized financing to support approximately \$17.8 billion in U.S. exports worldwide, a 25% jump from a year earlier.

For more information on Ex-Im Bank visit the web site at <http://www.exim.gov>. More information on the Van Andel Global Trade Center may be found on the Web at <http://www.vagtc.org>.

For information on becoming a City-State Partner, or contacting existing Partners, e-mail Mr. Gus Grace via e of Ex-Im Bank at [Gus.Grace\(at\)exim.gov](mailto:Gus.Grace(at)exim.gov).

The original URL of this page is:

<http://www.exim.gov/pressrelease.cfm/0F2F9C3F-CEBB-2825-F1E1C4350E270066/>

Export-Import Bank of the United States
811 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20571
Tel: 1 (202) 565-3946 (EXIM) or 1 (800) 565-3946 (EXIM)

Area Economy

MICHIGAN EXPORTS *Sonja Johnson*

Time is right for export opportunities in West Michigan

For companies that are at least three years old and showing a strong balance sheet, but have yet to test the international waters, here's a message: Get in the game.

Over the past decade, Michigan's export sales have been in the top 10 states of the nation, according to U.S. Census Bureau data. Now more than ever, it is easier to reach customers around the world. There are approximately 16,000 small and medium-size enterprises in Michigan currently diversifying their customer base by growing sales outside U.S. borders, where 95 percent of the world's customers reside. In 2008, U.S. exports represented approximately 13 percent of the nation's gross domestic product and supported more than 10 million U.S. jobs. If your business has been established for the last three years and is showing a strong balance sheet, then you may be at a point to consider sales to foreign markets.

According to the International Trade Administration, in 2010, nearly 41 percent of U.S. exports of goods went to countries where free trade agreements were in place. So, a good starting point may be as close as Michigan's northern border, Canada, where approximately 50 percent of the state's current exports are going and the NAFTA agreement is in place. Often, Foreign Trade Agreements reduce the cost of entry and allow exporters to even the playing field or

gain a competitive edge.

The U.S. has 12 current FTAs established with 17 countries. The most recent FTAs were passed in October 2011 — with South Korea, Panama and Colombia — and are currently undergoing the process of implementation. The U.S. also is negotiating a new regional FTA, called The Trans-Pacific Partnership, with Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.

In addition to FTAs, the exchange rate of the U.S. dollar may be another factor for opportunities for foreign sales growth for Michigan businesses. Many consumers around the world now are able to afford and secure financing to purchase U.S.-made goods and services. Machinery and capital equipment used throughout the world are in high demand, as well as advanced technology and services.

Resources at the federal and state levels recently have been deployed to directly support the National Export Initiative announced in January 2010, with the goal of doubling U.S. exports in five years and adding 2 million jobs to the U.S. economy. To reach this ambitious goal, U.S. exports must expand from \$1.57 trillion in 2009 to \$3.14 trillion by 2015. There are five areas focused on through the NEI:

- Educating U.S. businesses about sales opportunities outside U.S. borders and assisting businesses to connect with

foreign customers;

- Improving access to credit, particularly for those small and medium-size businesses (having 500 or fewer global employees) that are looking to start and/or grow export sales;

- Improving enforcement of international trade laws that prevent U.S. companies from gaining free and fair access to markets outside the U.S.;

- Improving advocacy and trade promotion efforts on behalf of U.S. exporters; and

- Pursuing policies at a global level to promote strong, sustainable and balanced growth.

In 2011, the U.S. Small Business Administration announced a national pilot program to support the NEI called State Trade and Export Promotion, which provides \$30 million annually for up to three years, targeting export growth for small and medium-size enterprises. Michigan received \$1.5 million in SBA funding through the STEP pilot program, which will be administered statewide by the Michigan Economic Development Corp. Businesses that qualify for assistance and have fewer than 500 employees may receive export assistance to develop and increase export-related activities in line with the NEI goals. Michigan is ready to foster job creation by increasing the state's export sales, increasing the number of businesses that export, and introducing existing exporters to new foreign markets and buyers.

Grand Valley State University's Van Andel Global Trade Center, with its 12 years of helping Michigan businesses grow internationally, was selected by MEDC to host the West Michigan Region Export Network for the state's STEP program, overseeing a 20-county region. Growing exports to international markets and helping businesses create jobs and diversify risk is something the center understands and has been involved with daily.

The STEP funds will cover 50 percent of out-of-pocket costs incurred by eligible businesses for export marketing activities, to a maximum of \$25,000. Examples of activities that would qualify for STEP reimbursement include overseas trade missions, overseas trade show participation and language translation for marketing materials.

Each business qualifying for STEP reimbursement will receive an "export readiness" assessment, a customized export road map, and will be tracked to evaluate progress under the STEP program.

For more information on STEP, visit www.michiganadvantage.org/STEP or contact GVSU's Van Andel Global Trade Center at (616) 331-6811.

Sonja Johnson is the executive director of the Van Andel Global Trade Center, Seidman College of Business, Grand Valley State University.

Success Story

In July 2010, it was announced that a subsidiary of South Korean battery maker LG Chem would be setting up a new factory in Holland, Michigan, that would employ over four hundred people. In the longer term, this investment is estimated to bring over \$2 billion to the Holland area.

In August 2010, the Holland Chamber of Commerce approached the Van Andel Global Trade Center to conduct a seminar on the basics of South Korean culture and business etiquette, so that the businesses and residents of Holland would gain a deeper understanding of Korean culture and be more equipped to welcome Korean newcomers into their local community.

The seminar was scheduled for October 6th, and once it was announced, the event sold out within 48 hours! Over 80 people attended the engaging and informative seminar, and it made the front pages of the Holland Sentinel news. The speaker from the Van Andel Global Trade Center provided much insight into the differences between U.S. and South Korea's cultural values, giving humorous examples to illustrate her points. She also gave many helpful pointers on basic business and social etiquette—from introductions to giving gifts, and understanding the structure of Korean names.

Due to the overwhelming response and highly positive reviews from attendees, the Holland Chamber scheduled a second seminar. This event was also packed, attracting over 200 participants to hear about South Korean culture!



The events brought together people from all different segments of society, from businesses to medical institutions, schools, churches and other non-profits.

"We never expected such a strong turnout. It really took us by surprise!" says a representative from the Holland Chamber.

"We very much value our partnership with the Van Andel Global Trade Center. The quality of the program exceeded our expectations, and we look forward to future opportunities to work with them again." Jane Clark, President, Holland Area Chamber of Commerce



Success Stories

Falcon Waterfree Technologies was formed with a vision: to promote conservation of the Earth's precious supply of fresh water and support sustainable resource management by becoming the leading urinal system provider in the world. By 2010, FW's waterless urinal systems were quickly gaining acceptance around the world. They were manufacturing in 9 countries, and had offices and affiliates in over 45 nations, and quickly had a very active import program.

Bill Stimer, Vice President for Operations, and Bob Matz, Supply Chain Manager, were tasked with developing an import compliance program. They attended many training programs, and spoke with multiple customs brokers, but still they were not able to find an answer to their one main question. Their waterfree urinals were such a unique product, that no one knew how they needed to be classified for customs entry and what duty rate applied. Bill Stimer and Bob Matz wanted to find out if they were using the proper classification, or if not, whether they could qualify for a different classification at a lower rate.

Bill Stimer and Bob Matz eventually found their way to the Van Andel Global Trade Center (VAGTC), the international business assistance center of Grand Valley State University, and once again, they explained the question they were dealing with. After listening to their dilemma, the VAGTC developed an advisory classification opinion for them, listing out the various classifications that their product could potentially fall into. For the first time, Bill Stimer and Bob Matz had a clear description of the options that were available to them. They now had a clear decision to make—should they apply for a binding ruling to have their duty rate reduced? The risk was, if the ruling was unfavorable, they could wind up with a higher duty rate than before. They brought up the issue to their senior management team, and after discussion, they decided to follow VAGTC's advice, and move forward.

It took 4 weeks for the decision to be returned, but Customs came back with the most favorable classification that the VAGTC had laid out for them. **This new ruling is now saving Falcon Waterfree Technologies over \$50,000 in customs duty annually, and even greater savings in the future as their business continues to grow.**

"We would definitely work with the Van Andel Global Trade Center again. In fact, we already have a few new projects in the pipeline with them. We highly recommend their services"

- Bob Matz, Supply Chain Manager

